

The States for Passenger Rail Coalition

States for Passenger Rail Coalition 2010 Annual Report

1. Context

In October 2008, President Bush signed the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PL 109-432). States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC) members were critically involved in at least three major policy provisions:

- Section 209, cost allocation methodology for Amtrak-provided service;
- Section 212, goals and future cost allocation for the Northeast Corridor;
- Section 305, development of specifications and procurement of the next generation of intercity passenger rail equipment.

Further, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided \$8 billion for High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) projects and the FY 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act provided an additional \$2.5 billion for HSIPR. While warmly welcomed by the states, the long overdue funding catalyzed a swift and dramatic re-orientation of state departments of transportation's rail divisions and of the Federal Railroad Administration. States worked tirelessly to meet the ever-changing grant requirements. The funds were distributed and states began negotiations with host railroads and various elements of the federal government.

2. Mission and Membership

SPRC is a coalition of 34 state departments of transportation and 3 passenger rail authorities and commissions to advocate for federal funding and support for intercity passenger rail initiatives.

In 2010, the Coalition members were Alabama, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Capitol Corridor, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, and Southern High Speed Rail Commission.

3. Key Activities and Achievements in 2010: Input

Goal: Give all members prompt, timely and accurate information regarding intercity passenger developments and federal funding.

SPRC held three well-attended membership meetings during the year:

- January Membership Meeting in Washington, DC;
- March Membership Meeting in Washington, DC;

- September Membership Meeting in Jacksonville, FL.

SPRC held three regional listening sessions during the year:

- June 22-23 Western Listening Session in Tempe, AZ; attendees from AZ, CA, LA, and NV.
- July 14 Southern Listening Session in New Orleans, LA; attendees from AL, GA, LA, MS, SC, Southern High-Speed Rail Commission, AASHTO, I-95 Corridor Coalition, and two former FRA administrators.
- July 21 Northeast Listening Session in Saco, ME, held in conjunction with Council of State Governments, Eastern Regional Conference. Over 30 people from the US and Canada attended.

Coalition-wide conference calls were held during the year. The calls help to bring the membership up-to-date on developments and to assign roles to individual states in the efforts to achieve our mutually agreed upon goals.

The Executive Committee in conjunction with additional members held bi-weekly conference calls to carefully manage activities.

SPRC retained David Ewing to represent the group in Washington. David distributed material electronically and by other means to the collective membership and in response to individual requests. Over fifty updates were transmitted. David Ewing represented SPRC at several meetings and conferences including:

- January 11 presenter at TRB's 89th Annual Meeting;
- February 19 presenter at SHSRC Full Commission Meeting in Ridgeland, MS;
- July 15-16 presenter at SHSRC's Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Summit in New Orleans, LA.

4. Key Activities in 2010: Messages & Venues

Goal: Raise our collective voice in support of a strong federal partnership to create a dedicated source of funding for capital investment in intercity passenger rail equipment, infrastructure, and facilities. SPRC retained the services of John Boffa of Boffa and Associates to provide technical assistance in getting the word out. Examples of the efforts include:

- January 28 – Press Release “New Hampshire Joins States for Passenger Rail Coalition; Membership Now Totals 31 States”;
- January 29 – Press Release “States for Passenger Rail Coalition Applauds President Obama For Historic Commitment to Passenger Rail Expansion”;
- May 7 – Press Release “State Rail Coalition Marks Celebration of National Train Day”;

- May 14 – Press Release “State Rail Coalition Asks Congress To Provide Strong Support for Passenger Rail in 2011”;
- May 27 – Press Release “Texas Joins States For Passenger Rail Coalition; National Membership Leaps To 32 States”;
- July 9 – Press Release “Rhode Island Joins States for Passenger Rail Coalition; National Membership Reaches Record of 33 States.”

Over 500 copies of the brochure “Intercity Passenger Rail in America” were distributed to decision makers. The four-page, single fold, 8 ½” x 11” document lists the benefits of intercity passenger rail. The publication, also available on our website, was well-received. It continues to have a strong shelf life.

In addition to the outreach activity listed above, SPRC met with the President and Chief Operating Officer of Amtrak, Joseph Boardman. Numerous meetings were held with Amtrak staff.

Efforts were made to carefully coordinate with AAR and APTA. SPRC entered into an MOU with APTA and AASHTO to coordinate participation and planning of meetings.

5. Congressional Correspondence:

- February 1 – Letter to Susan Martinovich, Director of the Nevada Department of Transportation from Frank Busalacchi. The letter sought consideration by the AASHTO Standing Committee on Research of two problem statements that address important areas of rail research and are proposed for funding under the NCHRP program. The first problem statement concerns the “Comprehensive Economic Effects of Highway-Rail At-Grade Crossing Crashes.” The second problem statement addresses the need for a “Capacity Modeling Guidebook for Shared-Use Passenger and Freight Rail Operations.”
- February 9 – Letter to Senators Durbin and Dorgan from Frank Busalacchi thanking them for their continued support for intercity passenger rail and their consideration to further invest in the nation’s passenger rail network.
- April 15 – Letter to Senators Kerry, Graham, and Lieberman from the OneRail Coalition. The letter urges the Senators to ensure the rail sector is in a position to maximize its contribution to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- April 21 – Letter to Representatives Olver and Latham from William Bronte Vice Chair of SPRC to share the views of SPRC regarding the FFY 2011 appropriation of funding for rail-related programs and activities.

6. 2011 Officers:

In late December, the membership voted unanimously to suspend the rules and allow Bill Bronte to serve a second consecutive term as Vice Chair; the membership then again voted unanimously to elect the following slate of officers for 2011:

Paula Hammond, Secretary, Washington Department of Transportation, Chair

Bill Bronte, Chief Division of Rail, California Department of Transportation, Vice Chair

Donna Brown, Passenger Rail Planning Manager, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Treasurer

Caitlin Hughes Rayman, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, Maryland Department of Transportation, Secretary.

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